

REMARKS

Applicants confirm the provisional election of Group I, claims 1-6, drawn to a plate, which was made by telephone on January 17, 2007. Additionally, in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request rejoinder of Group II, pending claims 7, 8 and 10-14, drawn to a method for producing a plate.

Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite; claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Kraus (US 2,861,896); claims 1, 2 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Gandon et al. (WO 02/02472); claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Gandon et al.; claims 4 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Gandon et al. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections as set forth below.

Claim 2 is amended herein to include the recitation of “absolute temperature” with regard to the melting points and softening point in the claim. The amendments to claim 2 are supported by at least page 6, line 22 – page 7, line 2 of the specification. Accordingly, the temperatures mentioned in claim 2 are definitely recited.

Claim 1 is amended to recite that “an outer layer of the Ag fine particles covers the central portion and contains only silver.” Withdrawn claim 7 is amended to change “a layer” to “central portions” and to recite that “an Ag layer is laminated on the central portions on the surface of the transparent substrate, followed by a heating treatment, thereby forming each Ag fine particle in which the central portion is surrounded by an outer layer containing only silver.” The amendments to claims 1 and 7 are supported by at least original claim 9, Fig. 1 and page 4, line 21 – page 5, line 11 of the specification. Claim 14 is amended to change its dependency.

According to amended claim 1, as shown in FIG. 1 for example, each Ag fine particle 1 is formed of a central portion 3 containing an Ag alloy (i.e., an alloy formed of Ag and a metal forming a homogeneous solid solution with Ag) and an outer layer 2 containing only Ag. Specifically, claim 1 includes the feature of “an outer layer of the Ag fine particles covers the central portion and contains only silver.” This two-layer structure (i.e., the central portion and the outer layer) of the Ag fine particles has an advantage of making it easier to control the Ag fine particle shape. *See, e.g., Applicants’ specification at p. 5, lines 16-22.* Applicants submit that Kraus fails to teach or suggest the above-mentioned feature of claim 1. Instead, Kraus discloses a single transparent layer formed on a glass substrate. *See, e.g., col. 6, line 61 – col. 7, line 14.* Kraus’s single transparent layer does not correspond to the central portion and outer layer structure claimed in claim 1. Therefore, claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Kraus.

Similarly, Applicants submit that the above-mentioned two-layer structure of the Ag fine particles according to the claimed invention is not disclosed by Gandon et al. As claimed in claim 1, a central portion of the Ag fine particles contains an alloy formed of Ag and a metal forming a homogeneous solid solution with Ag, and an outer layer of the Ag fine particles covers the central portion and contains only silver. This structure is illustrated, for example, in FIG. 1 of the present application, which shows a central portion 3 and an outer layer 2. By contrast, Gandon et al. discloses a layer structure of an Ag layer deposited on an SiO₂ layer. *See paragraphs [0095]-[0096].* Thus, the structure disclosed by Gandon et al. does not correspond to the structure claimed in claim 1. Therefore, claims 1, 2 and 5 are patentable over Gandon et al.

Applicants submit that claims 3, 4 and 6 are patentable over Gandon et al. due to their dependence from claim 1.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #038788.56803US).

Respectfully submitted,

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